

Safety and Aesthetics in Urban Roadway Design
Interdisciplinary Group Meeting
September 25, 2002, 9:00 to 3:00 p.m.
WSDOT Materials Lab Conference Room

Members in attendance:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Agency</u>	<u>Phone</u>
Dave Olson	WSDOT – Design Office	360-705-7952
Brian Hasselbach	WSDOT – Design Office	360-705-7255
Rich Meredith	City of Seattle – Traffic Ops	206-684-5106
Ken Brown	City of Spokane – Design	509-625-6678
Lynn Price	City of Bremerton	360-478-5272
Mike Johnson	City of Seattle – Rdwy Design	206-684-5187
Neal Campbell	WSDOT – Project Design	360-570-6602
Jim Morrow	City of Tukwila	306-433-0179
Maiya Andrews	City of Des Moines	206-870-6523
Paul Harker	FHWA	360-753-9552
Ted Focke	WSDOT – Design Office	360-705-7270
Al King	WSDOT – H&LP	360-705-7375
Larry Hinson	WSDOT – Design Office	360-705-7540
Paula Reeves	WSDOT – H&LP	360-705-7258
Thera Black	Thurston Regional Planning Council	360-786-5480
Jim Seitz	AWC	360-753-4137
Mark Maurer	WSDOT – Design Office	360-705-7242
Sally Anderson	WSDOT – NWR Landscape Architect	306-440-4501
Shane DeWald	SDOT Landscape Architect	206-684-5041
King Cushman	Puget Sound Regional Council	206-464-6174
Mark Leth	WSDOT – NW Traffic	206-440-4487
Shari Schaftlein	WSDOT – Environmental Affairs	360-705-7446
John Milton	WSDOT – Design Office	360-705-7299

Dave Olson welcomed everyone to the fifth meeting of the quarterly meetings. The meeting opened with introductions and a review of the agenda.

Progress Update: Dave Olson provided a summary of the progress of the Safety and Aesthetics Disciplinary Team to date. The summary included a review of the past meetings and accomplishments of the Interdisciplinary Team and Task Teams, over the past year. The purpose of the summary was to identify progress completed; allow for an opportunity to re-visit the group's goals and priorities; and to bring new people up to speed. The following comments were noted from the group:

- There was some discussion regarding a suggestion that the Project Mission Statement, which was developed at the first meeting, should be re-evaluated to determine if adjustments are necessary.

- Dave reviewed the Interdisciplinary Task Teams that were previously developed and noted that a couple of new team members have been added. Neal Campbell (for Troy Cowan), Brian Hasselbach (for Nancy Boyd), and Mark Leth (for Dave McCormick).

Dave then provided updates on the various Task Team's status and accomplishments.

- Urban Clear Zone: Team has produced a *Design Manual* Supplement, developed as a compromise solution for managed access facilities, within the limits of incorporated cities and towns. The *Design Manual* Supplement went through a lengthy review process before adoption on September 16, 2002. John Milton presented more on the Design Clear Zone and the *Design Manual* Supplement later in the meeting.
- Jurisdictional Roles and Responsibilities: Recommendations from the Jurisdictional Roles and Responsibilities team has resulted in a Draft Instructional Letter (IL). The Instructional Letter communicates policy changes to the WSDOT manuals, regarding responsibility for design elements on state highways within the limits of incorporated cities and towns. The IL is currently out for review and comments are due by October 9, 2002. Comments on the draft IL can be returned to John Milton, Dave Olson, or Al King.

A concern was raised that the Jurisdictional Roles and Responsibilities Task Team did not include any local agency representatives. It was clarified that the Task Team utilized Al King as a representative for the local agencies' perspective. Additionally, the Draft IL has been distributed to local agencies and the current review period provides additional opportunities for local agencies to assist in shaping this policy.

- Speed Limit Reduction: Nothing new was presented on this issue. RCW 46.61.415 has been placed on the web-page as a reference. It was also noted that Mike Dornfeld was checking with the AG's office on an interpretation of this RCW and follow-up should occur with him.
- Landscape Architecture: A brochure for "Medians and Roadsides" has been developed and is currently posted on the Urban Design/Urban Policy Development web site. A new brochure is under development for "Medians and Barrier Aesthetic Treatments". Mark Maurer requested assistance from the group in identifying locations that would provide different examples of Aesthetic Treatments that he could photograph for the upcoming "Medians and Barrier Aesthetic Treatments" brochure.

It was also suggested that the Task Team be re-named to "Landscape Architecture" to better capture the intent of the Task Team and effort.

- Building Projects that Build Communities – Recommended Best Practices: Local Programs has developed a draft document that presents a roadmap for local agencies to follow, when working with WSDOT, in order to develop projects that balance the needs of all stakeholders. Al King noted that the document is currently at graphics for final printing. Al believed the subsequent distribution of the document will be widespread – likely a combination of mailings and possible inclusion on web pages.
- Safety and Aesthetics in the Urban Environment Guidebook: Dave Olson noted that this effort will be the next big effort of the group. The team is working on developing a document that is intended to compliment the Design Manual, but will not provide specific Design standards. The purpose of the document is to facilitate good decision-making. Dave presented more on the Guidebook later in the meeting.
- Urban Roadside Funding Issues Group: This group seeks to develop a standard WSDOT funding level for roadside elements. Sally Anderson stated that a process has been identified. Sally further noted that the group is considering the use of a matrix for managing the funding program – a check off method. Sally also noted that a major difficulty with this effort is that there is currently no Legislative focus on this issue.

Dave Olson provided further summaries on other accomplishments and presentations the team has accomplished in the past year.

- Safety, Aesthetics, and Community Partnership Workshop: The workshop was a collaborative effort, with several team members involved in the organization and presentation of the April 30 and May 1, 2002 National workshop. A number of team members participated and the workshop, in general, was reported to be a great success.
- Research Project Updates: Dave Olson and John Milton noted that the Design Office has submitted a research proposal to the National Cooperative Highway Research Program (NCHRP), entitled “Development of Designs and Guidelines for Safe and Aesthetic Urban Roadside Treatments”. The research proposal was selected for funding and implementation. The project is currently out for bid and work is anticipated to begin on it, next year.
- In-Service Evaluation: It was noted that Mark Leth, NWR Traffic Engineer, has taken Dave McCormick’s place on the team. Dave Olson noted that the cities of Sea Tac and Federal Way have submitted In-Service applications and initial reports indicate that everything has been very positive. The U of W (Jennifer Knee) has been retained to conduct the evaluations. A significant reduction in driveway and pedestrian accidents and severity at signals has been duly noted and recorded.

Al King and Jim Seitz encouraged the local agency representatives present to discuss their feedback regarding the In-Service Evaluation. Jim Morrow expressed frustration over the city of Tukwila's on-going efforts to transfer jurisdiction of a section of State Route 99, from State Route 518 to State Route 599, from the State to the city. He explained the process the city had to undertake to try to convince the Transportation Improvement Board (TIB) to approve the request. After lengthy process and expenditure of both time and resource, TIB decided not to support the request. Jim expressed frustration with the process.

- Tree & Safety Research Proposal: Kathy Wolfe, internationally recognized for her work with the National Urban Forestry Advisory Council, with the University of Washington, has completed extensive research on trees in urban environments. Mark Maurer noted that her website provides greater detail on her findings. She is currently seeking feedback on her research and is willing to share information with this group. John Milton noted that working with Kathy Wolfe will provide a different and valuable perspective (as she is with U of W's Urban Forestry Department) from the research generally conducted with U of W's Civil Engineering Department and that it will be interesting to see the similarities between the two Department's research and findings.
- Urban Tree White Paper: Mark Maurer discussed the development of a briefing paper that presents the process for planting urban trees – what takes in order to plant trees in the urban areas. The paper was previously reviewed by the group and is located on the project's web page. Mark noted that the paper will continue to evolve and will continue to change over time, as new information is received. In response to a question prompted by Lynn Price, Mark also clarified that guidance will be developed to address plantings other than trees, as well.
- Utilities: It was noted that RCW 47.24 clarifies the city's responsibilities for decision-making and that DOT does not have permitting authority. The direction is based on defining criteria of 35 mph or less. Within city areas, regardless of speed, the city is the permitting authority.

Design Manual Supplement – Design Clear Zone: John Milton led a discussion on the *Design Manual Clear Zone Supplement*. He noted that this issue was a high priority for the group. The supplement is a culmination of the team's research and solution for presenting Clear Zone guidance. The supplement was officially adopted on September 16, 2002.

Al King stated that a formal agreement is needed for median section issues – related to Section B, page 4 of the *Design Manual Clear Zone Supplement*.

Thera Black requested some feedback about past examples of effective clear zone treatments. Additional education and examples will be helpful to her in working with partners and local agencies.

Shane DeWald suggested that in addition to the supplement, considerations including safety, aesthetics, environment, economics, modal needs and access control can also be used to establish the Design Clear Zone and should be considered very early in the process. The discussion, analysis and agreement might take place early in the consideration of the median and roadside designs. There is a need for aesthetic consistency along the entire corridor.

King Cushman expressed some concerns about there being more needs out there than “the old way” provides. He noted the need to recognize the following:

- one more point in guidance
- more funding
- looking at other needs outside of standard criteria
- legislature not active in this discussion

A concern was also raised as to how WSDOT is addressing the inconsistencies of Clear Zone guidance between the AASHTO Green Book and Roadside Manual, for example. John Milton noted that Dick Albin has been sharing those concerns and pushing the discussions of the Context Sensitive Design Solution Committees and the Research Project & Safe Roadside Alternatives, with the national committees he participates in.

In summary, John Milton and Al King noted that cities and towns set guidelines according to AASHTO. WSDOT has no authority over cities and towns, within their jurisdictions. A question was raised regarding areas outside a city’s jurisdiction, but within the urban growth boundary. John noted that the expectation is that active dialogue between the Department and local agency will occur in those situations.

Instructional Letter on Jurisdiction of State Highways in Cities: John Milton led a discussion on the Draft Instruction Letter (IL), which captures the recommendations of this Task Team. The Instructional Letter communicates policy changes to WSDOT manuals, regarding responsibility for design elements on state highways within the limits of incorporated cities and towns. The IL is titled “Jurisdiction over State Highways within Cities” and is currently out for review, with comments due by October 9, 2002.

John noted that Don Peterson, of FHWA, has provided his approval of the IL. John also noted that while negotiated designs will not be considered deviations, there will still be a need to document decisions through an approved process. The Design Office will be working on the development of that process. Comments from the local agency representatives present included a request to ensure that the process is an interactive one between the locals and the Department.

CSS/CSD Pilot Training by CH2M Hill: Brian Hasselbach provided a brief overview of the recent CSS/CSD Pilot Training John Milton and Dave Olson had set up. Brian noted that the training will be an important component in the eventual implementation of this group’s work and in an effort to avoid re-inventing the wheel, John had located a CSS/CSD training CH2M Hill had developed and contracted them to present the session for a handful of representatives, both internal and external to this group.

The intent of the pilot session was to evaluate the course; determine whether or not it was something we could use as is or if it required modification for our needs; and if modification, was necessary, an identification of the gaps.

Brian noted that, while the comments and suggestions for improvements were varied, it appeared, both in the evaluations collected after the session and in follow up inquiries Dave Olson made with the participants, that there is general agreement that the CH2M Hill training provides a good foundation and starting point for our training needs.

Brian concluded that John, Dave and he need to sit down, go through the comments and determine next steps.

Safety & Aesthetics in the Urban Environment: Dave Olson led a discussion on the current status of this document. He noted that the outline previously developed by Nancy Boyd and the group, had been modified and that individuals have been tabbed to draft specific sections of the document and production of sections is underway.

Dave noted that he had initiated a discussion with Shari Schaftlein, OSC Environmental Affairs Office (EAO), to discuss their participation in the development of the document. Dave asked Shari to briefly present what her shop had discussed and their progress. Shari noted that she had discussed the issue with her staff and the Statewide Environmental Managers (SEM) group and they broke the “Environmental Connections” topic into a number of categories, including:

- Night sky/darkness
- Urban air quality
- Urban noise
- Wildlife/natural habitats
- Use of recycled materials
- Cultural resources
- Greenbelts
- Water quality/quantity issues

The group recognized the importance of including an expanded environmental component in this document – particularly because the Department lacks (with perhaps the exception of the Highway Runoff Manual) a manual that outlines environmental design related best management practices (BMPs).

The group also noted the need to be mindful of environmental considerations not only leading up to the construction of the project, but also with the facility’s long term operations and maintenance. Dave Olson suggested that Shari coordinate with Mark Maurer and Sally Anderson on the environmental section.

The group engaged in a discussion in which a number of recommendations were made to revise the outline. Al King also suggested that it is important to clearly define the

purpose of this document and how this document will fit in with other existing documents. John Milton noted that the intent is to develop a document that provides a compilation of the considerations that must go into the design process – not provide the specific process and standards, themselves. Essentially, how do we optimize what is out there?

It was also suggested we revise the title of the guidebook. It was decided that clarifying the purpose of the document and drafting an expanded introduction to the document, would help flesh out a more appropriate title.

There was some discussion on whether the document should address only state highways. The majority of the group favored a document format that would be applicable to all roadways.

Dave Olson, Ted Focke and Mark Maurer presented the draft sections they have been working on and requested comment.

The group also suggested the need to form a Formatting Sub-Committee to ensure consistency with format and content of individual chapters.

Finally, Dave Olson initiated a discussion on how the review of the document should occur. The group agreed that the best method would be to send out the document for review by the group and ask for comment, as it is developed.

Wrap Up: Group agreed to meet again in early/mid January of 2003. Dave Olson and Brian Hasselbach will work on scheduling the meeting.

Action Items:

- Safety & Aesthetics in the Urban Environment - Draft goal & vision statements and purpose & intent of this document - draft purposes for comments on what this document is and how it fits with the other team documents. [Larry Hinson & Ted Focke](#)
- Evaluate comments received for CH2M Hill pilot training course and determine next steps for development of training. [John Milton, Dave Olson, Brian Hasselbach](#)
- Revise outline for the Safety, Aesthetics, and Context-Sensitive Design *Design Manual* Companion Document to reflect suggestions from meeting. [Dave Olson & Brian Hasselbach](#)
- Develop introduction for the Safety, Aesthetics and Context-Sensitive Design *Design Manual* Companion Document and clarify purpose. [Brian Hasselbach](#)
- Create Formatting Sub- Committee for Safety, Aesthetics and Context-Sensitive Design *Design Manual* Companion Document. [Dave Olson and Brian Hasselbach](#)

- Develop an approved process for negotiated designs, as outlined in the “Jurisdiction over State Highways within Cities” IL. [Brian Hasselbach](#)